BIBLICAL OLD TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGY

Nearly all who know about the Biblical Scriptures have at one time wondered when Adam was created and when was the flood! Seems like a simple enough question, just add up the numbers in Genesis 5 and Genesis 11 and you have the dates: right? Unfortunately it is not that simple! When one adds up the numbers it is usually assumed that the genealogies given are a continuous listing of fathers and the year and name of the first direct son, and that there is only one son of that name. We are told that each had many offspring, for example a tradition is that Adam and Eve had 33 sons and 23 daughters. The ancient Hebrew wording has no designation for grandfather, great grandfather, grandson, great grandson, etc.. The son mentioned could possibly be a son who some how distinguished themself or was the most favored son and not the first son. We all know of the custom in some families to have the same name for many generations and use designations like senior and junior or designations like I, II, III, etc.. (In 12th Dynasty Egypt there were 4 kings named Amenem-het, 18th Dynasty had 4 Thutmoses and 4 Amenhoteps, and there were 11 Ramesses in the 19th and 20th Dynasties. Assyria had 4 kings named Shal-maneser. And in the Scriptures there were 2 Abimelech, 2 Jabin and 2 Enoch.) And to further complicate the matter we have number differences between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint translation due to possible transcription or translation differences. And also the Masoretic text omits Cainan (or Kainan) which the Septuagint includes in 11:12-13. However, Luke also includes Cainan in his genealogy which seems to support the Septuagint translation.

Therefore, depending upon the preferred translation and interpretations of key passages by those doing the calculations we have greatly different end results. For the creation of Adam for instance different scholars have given us dates of 4,004 BC, 5,490 BC, 10,842 BC, and 12,028 BC as a few examples. And for the date of the flood 2,348 BC, 3,228 BC, 4,819 BC, and 5,799 BC are a few examples. (see Appendix A) The numbers from the Septuagint provide later dates than those of the Masoretic text. For millenniums the standard way was to assume that there was a direct father-son relationship for each name given and that the year given was the birth year of the direct son. From these calculations we get the lower values for the creation of Adam and the flood. But many students were not fully satisfied with these values since the archaeological evidences being uncovered did not seem to confirm these early dates. Then along came Harold Camping who proposed that unless it was obvious from the text that there was a direct father-son relationship, there was instead an ancestral relationship with the named descendant being born during the year of the death of the patriarch. This method gives the much later dates and seems to correlate more closely to the information being presented by archaeologists. But again these calculations did not seem to satisfy many since it deviated greatly from the standard interpretations of the Hebrew text.

Well then how does one choose between the various dates given? Not an easy proposition to resolve! However, there is another possibility not so often considered. In the Hebrew text there are overlooked occurrances of a single Hebrew letter separator interjected within the text of chapters 5 and 11 (see Appendix B). That is the Hebrew letter "Samech", the fifteenth Hebrew letter which as a numeric stands for sixty and is equivalent to the English letter S. It occurs between sets of verses pertaining to many, but not all, of the patriarchs and would seem to indicate that the information concerning most of the patriarchs stand alone and should be more properly considered as very short separate paragraphs. This we are proposing is a designation of a separation between most of the patriarchs dominion. An indicator that the text is not intended to be treated as one continuous chronological record. The samech break reportedly indicates a break to a lesser degree, however, in the Masoretic text Genesis record paragraph breaks are seldom indicated. And in the case of the samech breaks the majority of them are in chapters 5 and 11. Therefore, we propose that these breaks are very significant and should not be ignored. (To view a translation of chapters 5 and 11 with the Hebrew letter separators indicated, and alternate Septuagint year values, take a look at -[5]- and/or -[11]- Use the browser "back" function to return to this page.)

It is proposed that each patriarch is indeed the ancestor of the next listed patriarch, but for many of them it

is an ancestoral relationship through a number of not listed generations. As many others have suggested, the listing of 10 patriarchs in each of the geneology sequences of chapters 5 and 11 in the Masoretic text are listings of only the most renown men of these periods. That when the Septuagint translation included Cainan there was no error involved, it is just an indication that there were other direct descendants that have been omitted and for some reason one scribe preferred to include Cainan. Could it be that the scribe was a descendant of Cainan? Textual interpretation and placement of the separators would seem to indicate that possibly only in the cases of Adam-Seth, Methuselah-Lamech, Lamech-Noah, Noah-Shem/ Ham/ Japheth, Shem-Arphaxad, and Terah-Abram/ Nahor/ Haran are there direct father-son relationships. (See Appendix: C for examples of the use of the Hebrew word "yalad" , translated as begat, to cover multi-generations in additional passages of Genesis.)

Are the listed patriarchs the only ones that lived to such old ages? Of course we can't know the answer to this question. Possibly brevity was of a necessity because early sections of the Genesis record had been passed down orally through many generations before writing came into existence. The narrative can however be used as an indicator that as Josephus puts it "...they attain to so long a duration of life, for those ancients were beloved of God and made by himself; and because their food was then fitter for the prolongation of life,..."

Conclusion: We have briefly reviewed the confusing state of the interpretations of the Genesis record that allows some to propose many varied dates for the creation of Adam and for the flood. And have instead proposed that to use these portions of the Scriptures to determine dates is an incorrect interpretation. Instead for the times in question we will have to depend upon the best estimates that scientific technology can provide for us. And at present it would appear that the best estimates would be 8,000 BC to 10,000 BC for the time of the flood (see the Flood) and 12,000 BC to 13,000 BC for the time of Adam. Hopefully in the near future the scientists will be able to provide us with better estimates for these dates as technology continues to improve.

Now, Lets say it in Different Words

Why it is NOT proper to "add up" the genealogies of Genesis chapter 5 and chapter 11 !

1) "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Proverbs 30:5-6

a) NO where does the Bible "add up" the genealogies !

b) Or say to "add up" the genealogies !

c) Nor hint at how they should be "added up"!

d) Those that do so must assume that they know how the ancients did genealogies ! But, in fact they often used different rules than just a strict biological father to son lineage. (See Appendix A below.)

2) The difficulties with assuming one knows how to "add up" the genealogies

a) Luke adds a name: In Luke 3:35-36 he includes a Cainan between Salah and Arphaxad. Genesis 11:12-13 includes No name between Arphaxad and Salah. Cainan is the son of Arphaxad and Shelah is the son of Cainan

according to Luke; while in the Chronicle this name is not found. However, in Hebrew traditional lineage this name can be found, it is found in the Greek Septuagint Version. Why was this name not in our Bible and found in Septuagint and tradition? By some Hebrew traditions if a person died when they are very young before they have a chance to establish a name for himself, the child born to them will be known as the child of the living grandfather. This practice is shown in the book of Ruth where Ruth's son Obed is referred to as the son of Naomi. Ruth 14:7. If the son died before he established himself and legally took possession of the properties and rights as a son he would not be listed. Or if they were of bad reputation they might not be listed. Was the latter the case with Cainan?
In The Patriarchal Age: or, the History and Religion of Mankind (1854), George Smith writes[1]: *"It is remarkable that, notwithstanding the omission of the name of Cainan from the Hebrew text, and the consequent general rejection of him by historians, there are more traditions preserved of him than of his son Salah. 'The Alexandrine Chronicle derives the Samaritans from Cainan; Eustachius Antiochenus, the Saggodians; George Syncellus, the Gaspheni; Epiphanius the Cajani. Besides the particulars already mentioned, it is said Cainan was the first after the flood who invented astronomy* (astrology), *and that his sons made a god of him, and worshipped his image after his death. The founding of the city of Harran in Mesopotamia is also attributed to him; which, it is pretended, is so called from a son he had of that name.' -Anc. Univ. Hist., vol. i, p. 96, note."*
Such a deletion would not be acceptable to the gentile world where actual parenthood is always counted.
Many scholars have long proposed that due to the poetic similarity of Genesis chapter 5 and chapter 11 verses 10 thru 26 that only the most notable men were listed.

b) Is Luke favoring the Septuagint translation? **If Luke is favoring the Septuagint translation that also includes Cainan then we have a problem since the Septuagint has many different numbers in the genealogies, (see the figure below.) "The Bible Knowledge Commentary" by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck reports that though Luke had relatively few direct quotations from the Old Testament, 15 times his "references and quotations .. are based on the Septuagint." (The quote of 7:27 appears to be from an unknown text.)**

c) Yalad is multi-generational: **The Hebrew word "yalad" (Strong's #3205) can indicate multi-generations, thus some scholars have proposed that Genesis is using the "Patriarchal-Age" method which unless it was obvious from the text that there was a direct father-son relationship, there was instead an ancestral relationship with the named descendant being born during the year of the death of the patriarch. (see Appendix A below)**

Following we have the usage of "begat" ("yalad") including not only the patriarch, but entire families/tribes.

"And Canaan begat ("yalad") Sidon his firstborn, and Heth,
And the Jebusite, and the Amorite and the Girgasite,
And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite,
And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite:
and afterward were the families of the Cannanites spread abroad."
(Genesis 10:15-18)

Following we have the usage of "bare/begat" ("yalad") including 16 offspring in two generations.

"And sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli.
And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister: and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel.
These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter, and these she bare ("yalad") unto Jacob, even sixteen souls."
(Genesis 46:16-18)

e) The use of the term son is completely flexible: **Christ was the son of David, and in 1 Chron. 26:24, we read: "Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler of the treasures." This was in David's time, several hundred years after Moses. Yet Gershom was the son of Moses, while Shebuel was twelve or fifteen generations from the person whose son he is said to be;**

d) Matthew skips names: **One would possibly think that Matthew in his genealogy for Christ would have copied directly from the Chronicles, but in fact in verse 1:8 there is skipped three names between Jehoram and Uzziah (Azariah) that 1 Chronicles 3:10-11 includes, that of Akaziah, Joash, and Amaziah. Affirming as " The Bible Knowledge Commentary" by Walvoord and Zuck says "Jewish reckoning did not require every name in order to satisfy a genealogy."**

Therefore, the Biblical genealogies are often formulated under rules that differ from the strict biological father to son lineage.

Appendix A: Sample Chronological Calculations

Sample Chronological Calculations of Birth Date - BC

	"Ussher" Method		"Patriarchal-Age" Method	
	Masoretic	Septuagint	Masoretic	Septuagint
Adam	4004	5490	10842	12028
Seth	3874	5260	10712	11798
Enos	3769	5055	10607	11593
Cainan	3679	4865	9702	10688
Mahalaleel	3609	4695	8792	9778
Jared	3544	4530	7897	8883
Enoch	3382	4388	6935	7921
Methuselah	3317	4203	6570	7556
Lamech	3130	4016	5601	6597
Noah	2984	3828	5419	6399
Flood	2348	3228	4819	5799
Shem	2446	3326	4917	5897
Aphaxad	2346	3226	4317	5297
Cainan		3019		4762
Salah	2311	2961	3879	4302
Eber	2281	2831	3446	3842
Peleg	2247	2697	2982	3438
Reu	2217	2567	2743	3099
Serug	2185	2435	2504	2760
Nahor	2155	2305	2274	2430
Terah	2126	2126	2126	2126
Abram	1996	1996	1996	1996

"Archbishop Ussher, an illustrious prelate of the Irish Church .... His chronological

labors were directed toward affording an idea of the time that elapsed between certain events in recorded history. For this purpose he took the year 1 A.D.--the beginning of the Christian era--as his starting point, and calculated backwards as far as reliable recorded history afforded good working ground. He reckoned as far back as 4004 B.C., and then finding no more available material in the form of history, either written or inscribed, he had to stop. He did not mean to imply that he had reached the point of creation at all. On the contrary, he had simply gone as far as recorded history enabled him to go." (from Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible, Compiled and Edited by Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D. 1984)

"Bishop James Ussher (1581-1656) attempted to calculate the date of Creation by adding the generations of the patriarchs before Abraham. He arrived at a date of 4004 BC for the Creation. We now know his calculations were in error. There was simply not enough time between Noah and Abraham based on his figures. Noah is said to have lived for 350 years after the flood. But, adding the generations for the patriarchs between Noah and Abraham yields only 292 years. Thus Abraham would have been 58 years old when Noah died. This does not square with other statements of Scripture which indicate that Abraham's family and certainly his peers, were idolaters when God called him out of his ancestral land (Jos 24:2). If Noah were still alive, or recently deceased, idolatry would not be flourishing and the Flood still fresh in men's memories.

There are gaps, names missing, in the genealogical records in Genesis 11 and Genesis 5. We know this by comparing them with those in Luke 3. The term "begat" can and often did refer not to a son, but to a grandson or great-grand-son. In at least one case, it was an ancestor removed by 400 years! (Compare Ex 6:20 with Nm 3:17-19 and 27-28--see also Matthew 1:8 where three generations are omitted and I Chronicles 26:24 where there are 400 years between Shebuel and Gershom.)

The Bible implies great antiquity for the events of Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel and the separation of nations. By the time Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees and Haran to enter the land of Canaan there were already Kenites, Kennizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites there (Gn 15:19). In Egypt, the Pharaonic dynasties were already powerful (Gn 12:15). Philistines had arrived in Canaan from Caphtor (the island of Crete) and were in Canaan before Abraham arrived (Jer 47:4; Gn 20:2). It is not unreasonable to allow 2,000 years or perhaps as much as 4,000 years between the Flood and Abraham." (from "How Old Are Those Hills?" by Austin Robbins, B&S Vol. 11, No. 3, Summer 1998)

Appendix B: Interlinear Hebrew Text for Genesis 11 showing letter "Samech" separators

Following is an extract from "The Interlinear Bible" (1986) by J. P. Green, Sr. , page 9, showing the Hebrew Masoretic text with added bold arrows to indicated the "Samech" separators.

10 אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת שֵׁם שֵׁם בֶּן־מְאַת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־אַרְפַּכְשַׁד
These of generations (are) :Shem the Shem was a years hundred old and fathered Arpachshad
11 שְׁנָתַיִם אַחַר הַמַּבּוּל: וַיְחִי־שֵׁם אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־אַרְפַּכְשָׁד
two years after the flood .And Shem after he fathered ,Arpachshad
12 חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: ס וְאַרְפַּכְשַׁד
five hundred years ,and fathered sons and daughters .And Arpachshad
13 חַי חֲמֵשׁ וּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד אֶת־שָׁלַח: וַיְחִי אַרְפַּכְשַׁד
Arpachshad lived And .Shalach and fathered years thirty- five
14 אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־שֶׁלַח שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה
years hundred and four years three Shalach he after fathered
15 וַיּוֹלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: ס וְשֶׁלַח חַי שְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד
and fathered sons and daughters .And Shalach lived years thirty
16 אֶת־עֵבֶר: וַיְחִי־שֶׁלַח אַחֲרֵי הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־עֵבֶר שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים
years three ,Eber he after fathered Shalach And .Eber
17 וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת: ס וַיְחִי־עֵבֶר
And lived .daughters and sons and fathered years hundred and four
Eber And lived .Peleg and fathered years thirty- four Eber

..."in the Masoretic texts and is present in our Hebrew Bibles today. A samech (the Hebrew "s") between sentences indicates a paragraph break of smaller degree, while a pe (the Hebrew "p") between the ending of a sentence on one line and the beginning of a new sentence on another indicates a larger break." (from http://www.fuller.edu/ministry/berean/chs_vss.htm)

The samech break appears 8 times in chapter 5, 8 times in chapter 11, and a total of only 15 more times in the other 48 chapters of Genesis.

(To view a translation of chapters 5 and 11 with the Hebrew letter separators indicated take a look at -[5]- and/or -[11]- Use the browser "back" function to return to this page.)

Appendix C: Examples of Hebrew word "yalad" (Strong's #3205) indicating multi-generations

Following we have the usage of "begat" ("yalad") including not only the patriarch, but entire families/tribes.

**And Canaan begat ("yalad") Sidon his firstborn, and Heth,
And the Jebusite, and the Amorite and the Girgasite,
And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite,
And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite:
and afterward were the families of the Cannanites spread abroad.
(Genesis 10:15-18)**

Following we have the usage of "bare/begat" ("yalad") including 16 offspring in two generations.

**And sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli.
And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah,
and Serah their sister: and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel.
These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter,
and these she bare ("yalad") unto Jacob, even sixteen souls.
(Genesis 46:16-18)**

Appendix D: Chronology of Ancient Egypt

The concept of an exact chronology for any civilization is fraught with danger and that of Egypt is certainly no exception. We are after all, dealing with a society with very little in the way of written history or literature to assist us. The Romans recorded events in relation to the traditional founding of Rome in 753 BC and the accessions of the various consuls and emperors; the Greeks from the date of the first Olympic Games in 776 BC. Egyptian chronology however, is a mixture of legend, fiction, astronomical data, documentary 'evidence' and an awful lot of guesswork!

In theory, history is arranged into 31 'Dynasties', each one being a collection of rulers from the same power base. This system was first employed by Manetho, High Priest and scribe at Heliopolis; who was ordered by Ptolemy II Philadelphus to write a history of the previous rulers. Manetho's list stretches from Menes (traditionally the first king of a unified Egypt) down to his own time. As well as the names of each king, he gives the length and some of the events of each reign. He was able to use the records held at the temple of Heliopolis, such as 'King Lists'. These original source documents have unfortunately, not survived, in many cases having been written on papyrus.

The Ancient Egyptians had no single, continuous era for counting years, such as our modern use of BC and AD. Instead, they dated documents and events by the year of the current pharaoh's reign. It is difficult to establish the exact order and length of each reign, as some kings ruled simultaneously in different parts of the country. There are ancient 'King-Lists', but these are not complete (sometimes for political or ideological reasons) and there are many gaps to fill.

Egyptian records of astronomical observations were sometimes dated by the king's regnal year. Using these rare occurrences we can attempt to calculate when this took place, giving a possible date BC in our own calendar. These are the cause of many arguments in egyptological circles however, so must be treated with the utmost caution.

Whilst modern research has thrown up many inaccuracies (in particular the individual reign lengths) the order of the various rulers together with the breaks in Dynasty are still very largely as Manetho wrote it in the 4th Century BC. Egyptologists today divide Manetho's Dynastic system into historical eras; reflecting stages of political stability, divided by times of relative internal strife or transition called 'Intermediate Periods'.

The main historical divisions now in general use are:

Dynasty	Approx. Dates	Historical Period	Capital
	5000-3150 BC	PREDYNASTIC PERIOD	
	5000-4000 BC	Badarian	
	4000-3500 BC	Amratian (Naqada I)	
	3500-3150 BC	Gerzean (Naqada II)	
0	3150-3050 BC	ARCHAIC PERIOD	
1	3050-2890 BC		Memphis
2	2890-2686 BC		
3	2686-2613 BC	THE OLD KINGDOM	Memphis
4	2613-2498 BC		
5	2498-2345 BC		
6	2345-2181 BC		
7 & 8	2181-2161 BC	1ST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	Memphis
9 & 10	2160-2040 BC		Herakleopolis
11	2134-1991 BC	THE MIDDLE	Thebes

		KINGDOM	
12	1991-1782 BC		
13 & 14	1782-1650 BC	2ND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	Delta
15 & 16	1663-1555 BC		Avaris
17	1663-1570 BC		Thebes
18	1570-1293 BC	THE NEW KINGDOM	Thebes
19	1293-1185 BC		
20	1185-1070 BC		
21	1069-945 BC	3RD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	Tanis
22	945-715 BC		Bubastis
23	818-715 BC		
24	727-715 BC		Sais
25	747-656 BC		Kush
26	664-525 BC	THE LATE PERIOD	Sais
27	525-404 BC		Persian I
28	404-399 BC		Sais
29	399-380 BC		Mendes
30	380-343 BC		
31	343-332 BC		Persian II
	332BC-323AD	GRAECO-ROMAN ERAS	
	332-305 BC	Macedonian Empire	
	305-30 BC	Ptolemaic Empire	
	30 BC-323 AD	Roman Empire	

(copied from http://www.smashman.iofm.net/new4chronology.html)

The above table starts at around 7000 B.P., however, very interestingly "11,600 years ago marked the beginning of the Rule of Mortal Humans on Earth according to Manetho (Egyptian historian ca. 343 BC)" prior to that was "Rule by Demigods and Spirits of the Dead (followers of Horus)". (from http://www.innerx.net/ personal/ tsmith/ iceciv.html) A very close correspondence to the indicated termination of the Younger Dryas (11,550 +-70 B.P. per the GRIP ice core data) and the time we would choose as the most likely time of the flood, and

soon afterward the tribes would start multiplying and migrating from the "Ararat" area into lower lands of the most northern part of the fertile crescent where the archaeologists have uncovered the first evidences of large scale farming and community building, around 10,000 to 11,000 B.P..

You ask, why include a quote from an ancient Egyptian Historian who writes of "demigods and spirits of the dead".? "It is ironic that although great reliance is placed upon Manetho and his "Egyptian History", no full text of his work actually survives. Manetho's history is known to us because several writers whose works have survived quoted extensively from it. These writers included Josephus, writing in the late 1st century AD, Sextus Julius Africanus, writing around the year 220 AD, and Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, writing in the early 4th century AD. Around five hundred years later, the works of Sextus Julius and Bishop Eusebius were used as a basis for a history of the world, written by George the Monk who was the secretary to the Byzantine Patriarch Tarasius (784-806 AD). All of these writers took only the extracts that they wanted from Manetho's work, so his account exists only in fragments within these later works." (from http://www.egyptologyonline.com/manetho.htm))

Concerning "the beginning of the Rule of Mortal Humans on Earth" according to Manetho, even though Adam and his offspring were to multiply and have "dominion", it is not until after the flood that we read:

Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.
And the fear of you and the dread of you
shall be upon every beast of the earth.
(Genesis 9:1-2)

Therefore we can conclude that probably before the flood mankind never fully had "dominion", that this was to happened only after the flood, "the beginning of the Rule of Mortal Humans on Earth".

(Note: We won't try to explain "demigods and spirits of the dead", but one could possibly contemplate the meaning of Genesis 6:4 which is also very controversial.)

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